

What is claimed is:

1. A method of identifying a compound which causes a dermatitis, comprising contacting a section of skin with the compound under conditions which would induce a dermatitis and detecting a polynucleotide encoding a cytokine wherein the presence of the polynucleotide is indicative of a dermatitis.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the compound is an allergen.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein the compound is an irritant.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein the dermatitis is allergic contact dermatitis (ACD).
5. The method of claim 1, wherein the dermatitis is irritant contact dermatitis (ICD).
6. The method of claim 1, wherein the skin is contacted *in vitro*.
7. The method of claim 1, wherein the skin is contacted *in vitro*.
8. The method of claim 1, further comprising isolating polynucleotides from the skin.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein the polynucleotides are DNA or RNA.
10. The method of claim 9, further comprising quantifying a polynucleotide encoding IL-4, wherein an elevated amount of IL-4 is indicative of ACD.

11. The method of claim 9, further comprising quantifying a polynucleotide encoding a cytokine selected from the group consisting of IL-4 and IL-8 in cells isolated from the subject, wherein the amount of IL-4 or IL-8 is indicative of ICD.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein an increase in IL-8 in the absence of IL-4 is indicative of ICD.